

PERSONAL

Tim Fisher
Mary Hank. The Chief Whip mentioned
X) to the PM this evening and the PM thought
that something on these lines would be worthwhile.

MR. BUTLER

FERB

22.2.

The Chief Whip came in today to talk about the aftermath of Monday's debate. He said that there had been some disposition on the backbenches to pursue the question of Mr. Ponting's anonymous letter to Mr. Dalyell in April in conjunction with his denial during the trial of any personal contact before the leak in July. The Prime Minister had indicated that she did not wish this to be raised in Prime Minister's Questions. At 3.30 on Tuesday, however, just before the Prime Minister left the Chamber, the Secretary of State for Defence said that he would be happy to see the point pursued in Parliament and the Prime Minister did indicate that she would be content. The Chief Whip however has some reservations about whether this is worth doing. There is a general perception in the House that the Government won the day on Monday and in his view there is no real point in raking over the ashes. If the point were worth pursuing the Chief Whip would prefer that this should be done by way of a letter from a senior QC, e.g. Ian Percival or Mark Carlisle to the Select Committee asking them to take this point into account in weighing the evidence.

You might like to mention this point to the Chief Whip on your return, and, if necessary, discuss it at Monday morning's meeting.

On an entirely separate point, the Chief Whip recorded that Lord Whitelaw would be having lunch with the Director General of the BBC next week and was intending to raise with him a number of cases of slightly unusual reporting.

TF

20 February 1985